

MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT



Office of Public Information

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HIGHLAND PARK DISTRICT COURT COLLECTS OVER \$270,000 IN OVERDUE FINES

HIGHLAND PARK, MI, December 14, 2004 – Over \$270,000 in overdue court fines and costs has been collected by the Highland Park District Court (30th District) as part of that court's efforts to improve its operations overall.

Chief Judge Brigitte Officer, who was appointed to the 30th District Court bench in August, 2003, and was recently elected to a full term, said the court would embark on a new initiative over the next few weeks to continue the collection effort.

"We have a duty to the public to make the court as efficient as possible, and that includes recovering money that is owed to the court for traffic violations and misdemeanors," Officer said. "That's the duty of good stewardship that the court owes to the public, because that money supports a variety of state funds, including one for crime victims."

Officer added, "Just as importantly, we have to hold offenders accountable, and that can only be done if we enforce the court's orders."

With help from the Michigan State Court Administrative Office, the 30th District Court will use national databases to locate persons who still owe court fines and costs. That information will be used to generate written notices and automated telephone calls to give final notice to those who have outstanding financial obligations. Enforcement actions will include arrest, garnishment of wages and assets (including tax returns), and referral to collection agencies.

State Court Administrator John Ferry commented that "Statewide, enforcement of court orders for fines and other financial obligations is a top priority. It is critical that courts ensure that their orders are enforced – we don't allow those who are sentenced to jail or prison terms to decide whether to comply, and it can't be any different for orders to pay fines and other financial obligations."

Ferry said that the initiative to enforce orders for fines and costs in the Highland Park District Court was one of many similar enforcement efforts that are being undertaken statewide, in circuit, district and probate courts.

“We applaud the efforts of Judge Officer and her court to improve operations, not only in the enforcement of sanctions, but in other areas of operation as well,” Ferry said. “In addition, the court’s experience has given us the opportunity to evaluate some new techniques and technology to improve sanction enforcement, which will be useful statewide.”

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